

City of Isanti
Economic Development Authority
Regular Meeting Minutes of
September 24, 2013
Isanti City Hall

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kuechle at 7:00 p.m.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

Members Present: Tara Hallberg, Larry Kuechle, Keith Dragisich, Dan Collison, Mayor George Wimmer

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Economic Development Director Sean Sullivan

c. Agenda Modifications

Motion by Hallberg, Second by Dragisich to adopt the Agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously

2. Approve Minutes of August 27, 2013 Regular Economic Development Meeting

Motion by Dragisich, second by Wimmer to approve the minutes for August 27, 2013. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Consider Adoption of 2013 CEDS

Sullivan presented the staff memo and indicated that he had updated all the demographic information and narrative for application. He highlighted the fact that unemployment fell from 5.6% to 5.1% for this area over the past year and stated that the new Isanti population is 5,369. The priority projects remain: Rail Industrial Park, Downtown Development/Redevelopment, and Medical Clinic/Campus.

All present acknowledged that a Hotel would help economic development for the community and would still try to help make it happen.

Sullivan indicated that omitting it from CEDS does not mean it's not something that the City will not pursue. A project of this type more than likely would not be eligible for Federal EDA dollars so its removal from this particular document made sense.

Motion by Member Wimmer, second by Hallberg to recommend to the City Council to submit the 2013 CEDS to the ECRDC as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Consider Recommendations Regarding EDA Involvement in Downtown Corridor

Chair Kuechle summarized the meeting he had with Economic Development Director Sullivan. He defined the area at a square outlined by First Avenue, Main Street, Heritage Blvd and Dahlin. The properties in the loop varied in age. 50% were 4 years old or newer and 50% were 80 years or older. He indicated that the City could leverage the newer properties to help invigorate the area.

Chair Kuechle asked who owned a large tract of vacant land south of Federated Coops.

Economic Development Director Sullivan identified the various property owners and the fact that there was a large area owned by the railroad. Multiple owners make it difficult to consolidate large tracts of land. Sullivan also indicated that the property the City looked at before last meeting is not a property he would recommend adding to the City portfolio – especially holding it for 10 years or more.

Member Wimmer supported Sullivan pertaining to the difficulties in consolidating properties when many owners are involved.

Member Wimmer asked is Economic Development Director Sullivan thought that there was a draw to Isanti (i.e. geography, market niche, tourist attraction).

Sullivan indicated that he could not identify a single draw for this area. He indicated that the investment in downtown by the city and new businesses has its appeal and could be built on. Trip generator exist (Post office, Retail/Custom meets, Creamery, City Hall etal.) but city is somewhat disjointed as to where the core / main street is. This is a challenge. The Rodeo, Rum River BMX, Soccer Complex are big draws for the community.

Member Wimmer indicated that Isanti is defined differently for a lot of different people. Old populations, new populations with differing needs make it hard to capture what “it is. We need to do a better job capturing people that come to event in Isanti.

Sullivan indicated the recent focus on the Farmers Market and Street Dances was an effort to drive traffic to the City of Isanti as a whole.

Member Wimmer asked Chamber President Neifert if she felt businesses were capitalizing on the traffic generated by events. She indicated that they have done a poor job to date. The chamber put a bag together 2 years ago to help drive business to local businesses but it was not very successful. Member Wimmer indicate the ABA (BMX Group) communicated that a local hotel would help the event be more successful.

Member Wimmer shared that a member of the private sector had suggested that the City build a Hotel on its own if a private solution could not be reached. Member Wimmer indicated that this

was not his idea and that he was not supportive of this alternative but promised he would bring this concept to the EDA.

More coordination of City Event with the private sector would help make the events more successful I an effort to showcase the city more.

Member Collision has been talking to downtown businesses and they have indicated that they are happy with the City efforts this past year. One business indicated he was disappointed we hadn't started this earlier.

Member Wimmer indicated the downtown ebbs and flows.

Member Dragisich indicated that most "tourist towns" have a draw. We don't have a clearly defined draw.

Member Wimmer stated that if we are going to work on the downtown loop we are going to need to do something. We need to look at property acquisition when it makes sense. We need to think about how we can foster investment in downtown to create more of a cornerstone draw downtown.

Member Dragisich asked if he thought the Community Center was in the long term plans of the downtown.

Member Wimmer indicated that Josi Wood was hired to manage/program the facility and that over the next year the city will encourage that facility to be very busy next year. He is working with the Finance Director to put together a capital replacement plan to ensure the Community Center continues to function.

Member Dragisich asked if a second liquor store was in the plans for the City.

Member Wimmer and Collision indicated that it was not.

Member Collision indicated that it might be a good idea to get large sandwich boards to help market the larger community events and real estate for sale. He indicated that a large craft show could be a draw to the community like they have in Little Falls.

Member Wimmer indicated that the Isanti Area Chamber doesn't have paid staff and most of the work is done by volunteers. It's difficult for the chamber to do more activities due to the lack of people power.

Sullivan indicated that although this year's events were relatively successful they can continue to improve next year. More signage for parking for downtown businesses and more involvement from existing business could be added.

Member Wimmer indicated that the City will be hiring additional staff and that this should help with helping the community grow/market efficiently. He indicated that putting events together and coordinating them is a good way to build energy.

Member Dragisich asked about moving the parade to Saturday and if it would help capture more people in Isanti.

Member Hallberg indicated Saturday was very busy with the Kids day already. This event is pretty successful – changing it may be difficult.

Consensus was to try to meet with area groups and put together a calendar of events and to try to fill in activities and help market them.

No formal action was taken

5. Other Business / Updates / Communications

Economic Development Director Sullivan highlighted the Staff Memo.

- a. Business Prospects
- b. X Caliper Engineering
- c. TIF Management Plan Update
- d. Revolving Loan Fund Document Template
- e. Re-establishment of Downtown Committee
- f. GPS 45:93
- g. DEED Job Creation Fund
- h. Isanti County
- i. Isanti Area Chamber of Commerce
- j. Minnesota Manufacturers Week October 20-26
- k. 2013 Business Arrivals and Departures in Isanti

6. Adjournment

Motion Member Dragsich, second by Member Hallberg to adjourn at 8:04 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Dated at Isanti, Minnesota, this 26th day of September 2013.

Respectively Submitted,

Sean M. Sullivan, Economic Development Director